EXPERIENCE OF THE PAST SHOULD INSPIRE CONFIDENCE IN THE FUTURE.

A DISCOURSE

ON

DOMESTIC MISSIONS,

DELIVERED

DURING THE ANNUAL SESSIONS

OF

FLINT RIVER PRESBYTERY,

IN THE

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, AMERICUS, GEORGIA,

APRIL 3, 1852.

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PREFACE.

The following Discourse was preached in obedience to the direction of the Presbytery. Its publication was deemed desirable by the Brethren, on account of the statistical facts it contains, and memoranda of the Early History of our Church in the State. These are few and brief indeed; yet they are as full as an exercise of this kind would permit. It is my purpose, should Providence see fit, at some future day, to present a more complete Account of the Origin and Progress of the Presbyterian Church in Georgia, and especially some Biographical Notices of those Ministers who labored here in early times, and aided most in planting it.

J. S. W.

Decatur, Georgia, April 14th, 1852.

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A DISCOURSE.

Whom, when Paul saw, he thanked God and took courage.
ACTS XXVIII, 15.

Paul, the prisoner of the Lord, was now approaching the termination of his journey to Rome. To Cæsar's judgment-seat he had appealed. Driven from his native land, by the incorrigible hatred and prejudices of his countrymen, to seek justice at a heathen tribunal, what might befall him, he knew not. For a moment he seems to falter and despond. He had pungently reasoned before Felix of Righteousness, Temperance and Judgment: he had eloquently discoursed before King Agrippa, of the Resurrection and his own conversion to God, until the former trembles under a sense of conscious guilt, and the latter is almost persuaded to embrace the doctrines of the hated Nazarine. He had been stoned, thrice beaten with rods, thrice shipwrecked, a night and a day he had spent in the deep—had been in perils of robbers, of his own countrymen, of the heathen, in the wilderness, and in the city; yet none of these things had moved him. But now he is advancing to the proud imperial pagan city of Rome. He was far from the land of his birth, and the bosoms of many cherished friends. He had never visited the capital of the world, and had no personal acquaintances there.—Nor could he entertain any very flattering anticipations of a favorable reception even by Roman Christians, being dragged along as a malefactor in chains. In view of these accumulated discouragements, we may not greatly wonder that the hitherto indomitable courage of the Apostle should experience a transient relaxation.

But He who feeds the sparrow and clothes the lily,

ing the God of their fathers, under their own vine and fig-tree, in their fatherlands, until the flashing sword of mad persecution wielded by the hands of Charles II and William III, made them glad to forsake the heather hills of Scotland and the green fields of Ireland to enjoy, unmolested, their cherished faith in this asylum of the oppressed. Nevertheless, Presbyterian families were among the earliest adventurers to the shores of the New World, and were scattered up and down the land, from the hills of New England to the sunny plains of Georgia.[1]

It is undeniably true, that Francis Makemie, an Irish Presbyterian, was the first Minister who proclaimed the Scriptural truth and order of the Presbyterian Church at any point between the icy "recesses of Baffin's Bay and the frozen Serpent of the South;" and that Somerset county, on the Eastern shore of Maryland, became the *Faderland* of American Presbyterianism.[2] Thus, it is a singular fact, that the chosen asylum of the persecuted followers of "the Man of Sin" should also be the birth-place of the first Presbyterian Church organized in this country. This important event transpired about the year 1688, or 164 years ago.

This was the starting point in the progress of our beloved Church on this Continent. Here her first altar was erected. Here her first spark was stricken out, and her feeble lamp shot forth its first ray of light over the bosom of the moral night of ages. Makemie planted this Church, and organized several others in the same region in subsequent days. He was an active laborer in the vineyard of his Lord---probably unsustained by any Board or Missionary Association---self-appointed and self-sustaining, for he was a man of substance.

In 1698 we find a Presbyterian Church in the city of Brotherly-Love; or, rather, a motly crowd of Baptists, Congregationalists and Presbyterians, having the name of a Presbyterian Church. Its first Minister, was a Baptist.[3]

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1 Hodge's Constitutional History, Presbyterian Church, p. 21.

2 Spence's early History of the Presbyterian Church.

3 Spence, p. 87. Dr. Hodge thinks Mr. Spence's zeal for the priority of the Mary-

Such was the beginnings of the Presbyterian Church in North America. It was, indeed, but "a handful of corn in the earth on the tops of the mountains;" yet it has been made to shake like Lebanon, and flourish like grass of the earth. It was but a spark, yet how great a matter has it kindled.

In 1705, the Presbetery of Philadelphia was ushered into being. It numbered only seven Ministers on its roll. It was a day of small things; yet this was the germ from whence has sprung that noble tree which now spreads its branches from Ocean to Ocean, andfrom the St. Lawrence to the Rio Grande. The increase of the Church, after this organization, was rapid; she lengthened her cords and strengthened her stakes.

We advance eleven years further in the eighteenth century, and the Synod of Philadelphia was erected in September, 1717, by the division of the Presbytery into four Judicatories, or Presbyteries. It was not because the Presbytery had become so numerous and unwieldy that its division was deemed advisable, but in order to secure greater convenience, and the general interests of the Churches. The entire number of Ministers in connexion with it at this time was 17. Five had died during its existence.

From 1717 till 1741, a period of twenty-four years, the affairs of the Churches were happily and successfully directed by this Synod. It sent out Missionaries, collected funds, maintained correspondence with foreign Churches, regulated discipline, organized Churches, and founded institutions of learning.

In 1741 occurred, what has been usually called the great schism, when a portion of the Synod withdrew and renounced its jurisdiction. It does not, however, appear that this secession took place because of heretical opinions, as to cardinal doctrines, entertained by either side, for both parties adhered strictly to the

land Churches carries him too far; and that the First Church of Philadelphia was not a motly collection of Presbyterians and Baptists---yet, he admits, that all the Churches composing the Presbytery of Philadelphia, were thoroughly Presbyterian, except the first Church of Philadelphia.—[Constitutional History, p. 82.] Dr. Hill says. Mr. Jedediah Andrews organized the first Church in Philadelphia, 1701. Andrews was a Congregationalist.—[Hill's Sketches, No. 8.]

Westminister Confession and Catechisms, but on the ground of a difference of sentiments in relation to certain measures. The number of Ministers belonging to the Synod at the time of this disruption, was fifty-four. Shortly after this secession the Synod of New-York was formed, by the seceding party. This temporary estrangement of the members of Synod, did not, however, retard the progress of the Church. Under the government of these seperate Judicatories, Zion's towers still continued to rise. Its effect, like that of the first persecution of the Christian Church, which commenced at the martyrdom of Stephen, tended doubtlessly to promote its growth and prosperity.—Each body labored faithfully and zealously to extend the Redeemer's Kingdom, and "to preach the Gospel in regions beyond." Nor does there seem to have been any great degree of alienation among these brethren. Their records do not afford evidence of such heart-burnings and bickerings as ordinarily occur under such circumstances—for, eight years after the seperation, we find proposals made by the seceding body for peace and union.

We pass over a period of seventeen years, when a happy re-union takes place in 1758. At the time of this re-union the Synod of Philadelphia and New-York consisted of ninety-four Ministers.

Thus, during forty years, the Ministry had increased more than five-fold, with a co-ordinate increase of Churches and membership.

The Synod of Philadelphia and New-York continued to be the Supreme Judicatory of the Presbyterian Church from this period until the formation of the General Assembly, in 1789. And, during these thirty-one years, Zion's King greatly prospered her.—When preparatory measures were adopted for the erection of that Judicatory which was henceforward to constitute a bond of union and correspondence throughout the Churches in these wide-spreading States, the Synod was divided into four Synods, having under their care fifteen Presbyteries and one hundred and seventy-two Ministers.

Here we might pause for a moment and "thank God" most heartily, as we contemplate the progress of our Church during the space of eighty-four years, from the founding of the first Presbytery until the organization of the General Assembly. Our Ministry had doubled itself more than twenty-four times; and, instead of a Church here and there, struggling for existence, we had extended our borders from New-York to Florida, along the eastern slope of the Alleganies, and even in the West our standard had been planted.

Yet, in such a brief survey as we are constrained to take at present, we can only look at the outer walls of our Zion. This much we may observe: She had passed through some fiery ordeals from intestine divisions and external opposition. In some regions, the arm of civil power had been raised against her. Her Ministers had been imprisoned, and her doctrines and order set at nought by "the powers that be." Yet, out of all her troubles, the Lord delivered her, and poured richly upon her His blessing; upon her He caused His Holy Spirit abundantly to descend, and added largely to her Ministry and membership. Amongst those who ministered at her altars, during this period, were some of the most gifted men whose names have been enrolled in her annals in that or any other age. Makemie, Rogers, Witherspoon, Smith, Caldwell, Hall, Craighead, and Samuel Davis, the Tennants, and a long array of others of blessed memory, stood on her high places.—Under their Ministry the Churches grew and spread from the hills of New England to the sunny plains of the South.

It will answer our purpose, now, briefly, to trace the progress of the Church towards the South. In the year 1755 the Synod of New-York erected the Presbytery of Hanover, embracing all Virginia, and the regions South. Fifteen years afterwards, 1770, the united Synods of Philadelphia and New-York, created the Presbytery of Orange, embracing the State of North Carolina, and the States South of it; and fourteen years thereafter, 1784, it constituted the Presbytery of South Carolina. This was the frontier Presbytery on the South

at the organization of the General Assembly. It included within its limits the State of Georgia, then containing a few infant Churches, but no settled Ministry.[1]

Twenty-two years subsequently, 1796, the Presbytery of Hopewell, the mother of Georgia Presbyteries, was erected by an act of the Synod of the Carolinas in session at Morganton, North-Carolina. It consisted, originally, of only five members, to wit: Rev. Messrs. John Newton, John Springer, Robert M. Cunningham, Moses Waddel and William Montgomery: most of them men of precious memory, and who have all long since entered into their rest.

The first application for Ministerial supplies from Georgia was made to the Synod of Philadelphia and New-York in the year 1766, from a place called Briar Creek, probably in Burke or Scriven Counties. "To comply with the many earnest supplications, made this year to the Synod from North and South-Carolina, Virginia and Georgia," it sent out "Messrs. Lewis, Caldwell, Chesnutt and Bay, to go into these parts, as soon as possible, and stay as long as they can in preaching the Gospel and administering the Sacraments in all those vacancies which have supplicated, and in others where they may be invited." Lewis and Caldwell only complied with the injunction of Synod.—Briar Creek is mentioned again in the records of the Synod, as asking supplies in 1767. This appears to have been the only point in the State known at that time to the Supreme Judicatory of the Church, where

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1 In a communication from the Rev. Robert M. Cunningham, D. D., dated Tuscaloosa, Ala., June 1st, 1838, and now in my possession, and addressed to me only a few months previous to his decease, it is stated, that "the Rev. Daniel Thatcher, a Missionary from the North, arrived at an early period after the Revolutionary War, and settled in the upper parts of the State of Georgia, where he organized Churches in various counties—preached and administered the ordinances for some years without aid, except from transcient brethren."

Mr. Thatcher was a member of the Presbytery of Orange, North-Carolina. His name appears for the first time in the minutes of the Synod of Philadelphia and New-York in the year 1780 as a Candidate for the Ministry; [P. 486.] His name is enrolled as a member of the Synod in 1788, [P. 587.] How long he remained in Georgia is not known. Dr. Cunningham remarks, that, "Several young men having arrived in Georgia, preached in the Churches already organized, and brother Thatcher felt himself at liberty to return to his friends at the North."

Presbyterians had associated as a Church for the public worship of God.[1]

Several Missionaries were sent out, from time to time, to visit these distant regions, and dispense the bread of life to the few sheep in the wilderness; among whom honorable mention is made of Rev. Messrs. Close and Roe, by whose efficient labors several of the oldest and largest Presbyterian Churches in the Presbytery of South-Carolina, were, probably, organized.

The first regular call presented from Georgia, to any one to undertake the Pastoral office in a Presbyterian Church, was given to the Rev. Josiah Lewis, of New Castle Presbytery, by the Church of Briar Creek and Queensboro.' This is, probably, the same Church that is noticed in the records of Hopewell Presbytery for the year 1799, as petitioning for supplies—"a congregation below Waynesboro' called the Old Church."—Whether Mr. Lewis accepted this call or not, does not appear. This was five years antecedent to the Declaration of Independence.

Thus was Presbyterianism planted in Georgia by Missionary labors, and to long continued and most self-denying Missionary efforts are we indebted, at this day, for our strength and prosperity. Our most efficient and flourishing Churches have been founded by Missionaries, and have been fostered and built up by their toils and cares. And here let me recur to the remark, that our Church "has always been a Missionary Church." To this fact, under the blessing of God, must be attributed her rapid increase, and present wide-extended influence. In view of this, it has been

1 There was, probably, a Presbyterian Church in Savannah before 1760. Holmes, in his American Annals says, that "John Joachim Zubly, D.D., was a native of Switzerland. In 1760 he came to America, and was the first Minister of the Presbyterian Church in Savannah." [Amer, Ann, II: 527.] But this Church was not at that period connected with the Synod. A colony of Scotch Highlanders settled Darien, called by them New Inverness. [Bancroft, vol. III, 427.] I was informed by one of their descendents, a few years ago, that they were Presbyterians, and had the ordinances administered among them. This settlement was made in 1735, or two years after Oglethorpe landed at Savannah. Oglethorpe paid them a visit on his way to St. Augustine, and the Highlanders volunteered their service, in the expedition against the Spaniards. [Bancroft, vol. III, 431.] If this statement be true, here was the first Presbyterian Church planted on the soil of Georgia.

justly observed that "many intelligent Christians do not sufficiently appreciate the importance of Domestic Missions," or they would more liberally sustain them. The whole history of our Church, from its early planting to the present day, presents its Missionary operations, as one of its most prominent traits. Little, it is true, was done directly by the first Presbytery in the Missionary work. Its Ministers were all poor, with a single exception. They labored hard and struggled nobly to proclaim the Truths of the Gospel and administer its ordinances among the people around them; and they not only preached to their own, but they made "excursions of benevolence into adjacent regions; and this without pecuniary compensation or facilities of traveling. The affecting cries of the destitute came to them at every meeting of their Presbytery, as well as at their individual abodes; and the efforts which they made to relieve the spiritual wants of the suppliants were neither few nor feeble. After the Presbytery was enlarged into a Synod, a small fund was obtained to aid the operations and partially to relieve the pressing necessities of its members. Missionary services were extended to places more remote. It was in this way, that Presbyterian Churches were planted in the British Colonies of Pennsylvania and Maryland, and also in Virginia, and North and South-Carolina."[1]

In later days, the extension of our Church has been mainly attributed to our Missionary Boards. What, it has been asked, would have become of the planting and training of the Church in our Western wilderness, but for the enterprize and fostering care of these associations, aided by the benificence of our liberal and wealthy citizens. Of nearly twelve hundred Churches in the North-Western States, it is said, that scarcely fifty have been established independently of the aid of Domestic Missions. It is calculated that from one hundred and fifty to two hundred thousand dollars have been laid out in Churches in these regions, and that these have subsequently returned not far from a mil-

1 Dr. Green's Domestic and Foreign Missions of the Presbyterian Church, p. 15.

lion of dollars to the cause of Benevolence and the spread of the Gospel. Every true friend of the Gospel and every true patriot, loves his country best, when he loves our common Christianity most, and gives and prays for the success of Domestic Missions, in spreading far and wide the knowledge of Salvation.

But to return. I have traced the progress of the Presbyterian Church, South, until it has a local habitation within our State. One little Church—a feeble folk in the wilderness, rears her standard, and proclaim their love to her doctrines and order.

It would not be possible, nor proper, on the present occasion to dwell minutely on the extension of our Church within the State. This we know: that her light was very feeble during a long series of years. The Revolutionary storm passed over the country. Indian wars devastated our borders, and moral darkness covered the people, and our Churches were "few and far between."

It was on the 22d of July, 1790, in the little town of Washington, under the shadow of a large poplar tree, that the first Presbyterian Ordination took place, that had ever occurred in Georgia. Here the Rev. John Springer, a licentiate of the Presbytery of South-Carolina, was ordained and installed Pastor of the United Churches of Providence, Smyrna and Washington.—This ordination was performed by the Presbytery of South-Carolina. The first Minister ordained by Hopewell Presbytery, was Mr. Thomas Newton, at Hebron Church, Franklin County, 16th March, 1799.

An inspection of the records of Hopewell, during many successive years furnishes melancholy evidence of its feeble condition as to members. Its meetings oft-times failed for want of a quorum. Sometimes, for a period of eighteen months, it had no regular session.—Yet, feeble as it was, in this respect, it was by no means an inefficient body. All its members were working men, and during many years they acted as laborious Missionaries, supplying destitutions, and planting Churches. We could name a number of Churches still existing within its bounds—such as Washington, Heb-

ron, Thyatira, Newhope, &c.—now strong and flourishing congregations, which, more than half a century ago, were asking supplies of the Bread of Life at the hands of this Presbytery: nor did they ask in vain. They were fed and sustained by the indefatigable and self-denying labors of a Waddel, a Cunningham, the Newtons, Montgomery and others. These men were not "dumb dogs, sleeping, lying down, loving to slumber."

During twenty five years, Hopewell was the only Presbytery South of the Savannah. In the year 1821 the Presbytery of Georgia was set off, embracing the sea-board country, and, in 1833, our own Presbytery. Since that time the Presbyteries of Florida and Cherokee have been formed. These five Presbyteries, now constitute the Synod of Georgia, consisting, at its last and seventh annual meeting, of seventy-six ordained Ministers, and having under its care 117 Churches, and some 5,000 communicants. Thus, my brethern, has the Lord been with His Church in the wilderness.—He has led Joseph like a flock. Before Ephraim and Benjamin, and Manassah, He has stirred up His strength, and came and saved us. And now, as we turn our eyes to survey the intervening period of eighty-six years, from the uttering of the first Macedonian cry by the people of Briar Creek, "Come over and help us," until the present day, we may well exclaim, "What hath the Lord wrought?" Surely, "Thou hast brought a vine out of Egypt; Thou didst plant it; Thou hast prepared room before it, and hast caused it to take deep root. She has sent out her boughs unto the sea, and her branches unto the river." [P's. 80: 8—11.] "Let us thank God and take courage."

But from this general review of the early establishment of our Church in this State, let us turn to the consideration of some additional inducements for the indulgence of a grateful spirit, by marking the progress of Christ's cause within our own territorial limits, during a few past years, and within the memory of many present.

Some twenty-eight years since, a young and inexperienced Minister sought a home in the extreme

Western settlements of the State. The region was then the *ultima thule* of civilization—a rough, uncultivated frontier. On the adjacent Western hills, dwelt the red man of the forest, and toward the South were the homes and hunting grounds of the Creeks and Cherokees. From the Alleghany range, on the North, to the Appalachian Bay, on the South, no Presbyterian Church existed. The vast territory now covered by the Presbytery of Flint River was then, in the main, not only a moral, but a savage wild.

It was in the year 1823, that an adventurous Missionary (he yet lives) wandered into the new settlements, and finding a few Presbyterians in the county of Gwinnett, he organized them into a Church. It numbered only eleven members. Thus Old Fairview is the eldest born sister of the Churches of Flint River. Of this little flock, the youthful laborer to whom we have just alluded, took charge. In the year 1825 he was installed its pastor. He toiled in the school-room during the week, and preached in the log-cabin Sanctuary on the Sabbath. The Lord prospered the labor of his hands, and in less than ten years that infant Church had become a strong man—it numbered three hundred communicants.

In process of time, the Indian was removed from the South-Western borders of the State, and they became the home of civilization and Christianity. Laborers from different regions entered the Vineyard, sustained by the Georgia Domestic Missionary Society, and Church after Church arose, and revival succeeded revival, until Hopewell Presbytery, so small in its incipiency, became so unwieldy, by reason of the increase of members, Ministers and Elders, that its division became indispensable to the successful transaction of its business, and Flint River was, therefore, set off. At this day we number forty-one Churches, twenty Ministers and some two thousand communicants.

Thus has the Lord made us a people who were no people, and made us to ride upon the high places of the earth, and fed us with the heritage of Jacob. By our Ministry, God has called, and convinced, and saved

multitudes amongst us. He has collected us together and made us lively stones of His spiritual house, and members of His family, and of the household of God.—"This is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes." Times of spiritual desertion we have experienced; yet the cause of God, the cause of Truth and Righteousness, has never retrograded among us. Our light has not waned, neither has it stood still. Seldom have we been permitted to assemble as a Church Judicatory since our organization, that good tidings of the progress of Christ's Kingdom, in some part of our Zion, have not gladdened our hearts. God has been rearing our walls. This man and that has been born within them. This man and that has said, "We will go with you, for God is with you." Nor have we been without tokens of the Divine presence and approbation as a Presbytery. As individuals, we have gone forth from *time to time* weeping, bearing precious seed, but have been permitted to return, rejoicing, bearing our sheaves with us. Upon our Churches the reviving influences of the Holy Ghost have descended, sometimes as the copious shower, at others as the dew upon the tender herb. In a single year, hundreds have been redeemed from Sin and Death, and added to our Churches. The Lord has, indeed, opened "rivers in high places and fountains in the midst of the vallies." He has made "the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water." But not only for this measure of external progress, which has attended our personal efforts, should we be grateful, but likewise for that peace and harmony which has generally abounded among us; and for that soundness in doctrine and unflinching fidelity to the order and discipline of our Church which has ever characterized us as a Presbytery. When defection was rife in many of our sister Presbyteries; when division, contention, and every evil work, were laying waste many other portions of the Presbyterian heritage in the United States, we dwelt in peace: every member of this Presbytery, with a single exception, giving in his adhesion *ex animo* to our standards and the acts of our Supreme Judicatory. Then was the Great Head of

the Church with us; and when all seemed to threaten shipwreck to others, He rebuked the sea, and hushed the storm around us. God spoke out of the bush, and the flames which fastened upon others, threatening to devour them, swept by us without harm. The Lord did dwell in our Zion. He was round about us as a wall of fire, and he was the glory and defence in the midst of us. No one has ever been charged with heretical opinions belonging to our body, nor has it ever fallen to our unhappy lot to depose any one of our number for immorality. Here, then, brethren, we may raise our Ebenezer and sing, "Hitherto the Lord has helped us."—Yet, let me remind you, that in the midst of our gratulations we should not forget how far short we have fallen of the full measure of our duty—and how poorly we have requited Him who has called and honored us with a place in His Church and a part in the Ministry of reconciliation. How little, indeed, have we done for Him who has commanded us to "Occupy till He come." We may well rejoice, but it should be with trembling, lest, when the Master comes, He shall find us idle.

In closing this part of our discourse, we cannot forbear directing your eye, from the commanding position we now occupy, to the progress that Presbyterianism has made, during the last hundred and fifty years, in this country; and, as we contemplate its small beginnings, and its present extended influence and enlarged operations, we should in the depth of our souls "thank God," and draw from thence encouragement as to the future. Contrast, I beseech you, the present state of our own branch of the great Presbyterian family in the United States, with that little Presbytery which met in Philadelphia in 1705. To-day we number more than two thousand and fifty Ministers, twenty-seven hundred Churches, and over two hundred and twenty thousand communicants; and, if united with the other branch from which we were separated a few years since, we should at this juncture have more than thirty-five hundred Ministers, forty-three hundred Churches, and three hundred and seventy thousand communicants.[1]

1 If we should embrace all those Churches in the United States, who substanti-

We state these facts, not boastingly or vainglorious-ly, but that we may cause the hands which hang down to be lifted up, and that trembling, fearful hearts may be emboldened, and pure minds stirred up by way of remembrance. Then, we pray you, brethren, "Remember the days of old: consider the years of many generations: ask thy Father, and He will shew thee: thy Elders, and they will tell thee. The Lord's portion is His people: Jacob is the lot of His inherit-ance. He found him in a desert land, and in a waste howling wilderness: He led him about, He instructed him; He kept him as the apple of his eye." [Deut. 32: 7–10.]

We now proceed to consider:

II. The encouragement we should draw from a review of our past history as to the future.

Paul not only "thanked God" but "took courage." The Lord had sustained him hitherto, and prospered his way; should he not trust Him for all that was to come? Now, if there should be one timorous soul here to-day among Christ's servants---one fearful of heart, ready to cower before real or apprehended obstacles, let him, in the first place, open his great commission, and read the great promise with which it concludes, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world."--- This is the precious promise of the ascending Re-deemer, and the Bible contains many of like import.--- The Church of God has, in every age, experienced their verification. The gates of Hell have not prevail-ed against her. All the artillery of the powers of Darkness has failed to knock a single stone from her battlements; or to lay prosterate in the dust, even the most feeble defender on her ramparts. The cry has still been, "Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy,

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ally adopt the Presbyterian form of Government and Discipline, under the title of the "PRESBYTERIAN FAMILY," it doubtless exceeds in numbers any other denomination in the land. Not only all Presbyterians, properly so called, but also the Associate Reformed, Dutch Reformed, German Reformed, Cumberlands, &c. receive and practice the same ecclesiastical order: and if we add to these, all those in Europe, to wit: in Ireland, Scotland, England and Wales, and on the Continent, in Prussia, Switzerland, Hungary, &c. who adhere to Presbyterian rules of Govern-ment, it is doubtless the largest evangelical denomination in the world.

when I fall I shall arise; when I sit in darkness, the Lord shall be a light unto me." [Mic. 7: 8.]

The dragon has often opened his mouth and poured forth a flood of waters on the woman (the Church) as she has fled from his fury into the wilderness; yet they have served only to purify, and not to overwhelm and destroy her. Her progress is onward to the triumphant day, when the great acclaim shall go up from all the kindreds and nations of earth: "The kingdoms of this world, shall all become the kingdoms of our Lord and ofHis Christ; and He shall reign for ever and ever." [Rev. 11: 15.]

To push on the work to this glorious result, we are all solemnly pledged by our covenant vows; and to each one a portion of the wall to be builded, is assigned. The work, it is true, is great and arduous, but let us remember the reward is infinitely glorious---even a crown of glory that fadeth not away. But when we would efficiently and successfully accomplish any labor of our hands, my brethren, it is necessary that we first make an estimate of its nature and magnitude; for, "which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish." The Missionary field in this Presbytery is large, and will require all our means and energies successfully to cultivate it. This fact will be fully evinced by adverting to a few statistical facts.

The Presbytery of Flint River covers a territory equal in extent to thirty-three counties, or one-third of the State. The aggregate population of these counties, according to the census of 1850, was three hundred and sixty-nine thousand two hundred and forty-four, or considerably more than one-third of the entire population of the State. In one of these counties we have four Churches, in ten others we have two Churches each, in fifteen we have one Church, and in seven we have no Church of our denomination. The number of persons who statedly attend our Ministry does not, probably exceed ten thousand, of whom only two thousand are communicants. If we allow to each of the other two prevailing denominations in these counties treble

this number who regularly attend their Ministry, or thirty thousand to each, (and it is a very large allowance,) we have, in the aggregate, seventy thousand souls brought occasionally under Gospel influences, and leaving a balance, amounting to nearly three hundred thousand, accountable, immortal beings, hastening to the retributions of Eternity "without God and without hope"—without Christian instruction, or saving knowledge—without a sanctuary, or a Minister of Jesus Christ, to point the way and lead to Heaven.

There is yet another phase of this picture, which should excite our earnest solicitude. Only three of our forty-one Churches enjoy, at present, the ministrations of the Gospel every Sabbath; fourteen or fifteen are served twice in each month. The residue receive the Bread of Life once in each month, with the exception of some three or four, who do not receive even this small pittance. But let me bring to your notice still another fact in the case we are considering. It is of an astounding character, and should deeply affect our hearts: I mean *the moral condition of our Slave population.* The laws of the land and our own interests constrain us to care for their physical welfare; and, surely, the love of Christ and the worth of their souls should impel us to regard their spiritual well-being. An immense responsibility rests upon us in this matter. Look at a fact or two in the case. The colored population within our bounds, according to the last census returns, is one hundred and fifty thousand five hundred and thirteen.---In one-half the counties they exceed, numerically, the white population. In a few of them they double it; and this is especially true of the Southern portion of the Presbytery. Now, to this class of people we have but recently turned our attention, as an object of separate and independent effort. We have one Missionary who "devotes at least half his time exclusively to this interesting work," is the language of the last report made to the Synod on this department of our Missionary labor. But, my brethren, what is this among so many? Only think: One hundred and fifty thousand Slaves within our limits, and one Missionary of the

Presbyterian Church devoting half his time in preaching the Gospel of salvation to them! I am aware that most of our Ministers devote a portion of their time to the special benefit of this people, and that "increasing interest is felt in their religious instruction." Yet there is abundant reason for every Christian heart to bleed over the destitute and perishing condition of these "heathen at our doors." We all confessedly admit that there is no field which promises richer results, or a more abundant harvest. The Patriot, the Philanthropist, and the Christian are all interested in pushing forward every scheme proposed for the moral and religious improvement of this people. Their elevation, in this point of view, advances the prosperity of the country, the peace of society, and the glory of Christ.

This is a very hurried glance at the work before us: yet it is sufficient to show us something of its magnitude. You are doubtless convinced of this fact, that, "there remaineth yet very much land to be possessed." The great question now to be determined, is, "Are we able to go up and possess it?" I wait for a response. Do I hear some fearful soul answer, "We be not able; we have neither the men of might, nor the means to sustain them in the conflict which must be waged with the powers of Darkness. The great giants Infidelity, Ignoance, Indifference, a Pleasure-loving and a God-hating world are there. They are mighty and strong, and dwell in their walled cities?" Oh, these are the murmurings of unbelief. Hearken to the command of your leader, "Go ye up at once and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it." And if the Lord go up with us we need not fear. And who will, upon a review of the past, for a single moment doubt the approval of the Divine Head of the Church? Has He not been with us since the earliest planting of the Church on these Western shores, as a pillar of cloud by day and of fire by night?

Let, then, the past inspire us with confidence and hope in the future,

I. Because the difficulties and trials we have experienced, we shall experience no more.

The Israelites never passed through the waters of the Red Sea but once. The pursuing Egyptians they saw no more after the floods swallowed them up. They traversed the wilderness but one time. They thirsted only once, and the waters from the rock followed them all their journey through. They hungered but once, and the Lord gave them bread from Heaven until "they did eat of the old corn of the land."

The days of our feebleness are past. Our individual and collective trials have measurably disappeared. It is most certain that, that part of the wilderness through which we have been journeying, we shall never retrace. The sun-light of Heavenly approbation gilds our towers, and the darkness of earlier days is retiring, never more to return. Let us take courage, then, and our watch-word be "Onward."

The planting of a Church in a new and uncultivated country, it must be admitted, is attended with much self-denial, and requires a large share of moral courage. The discouragements are not few, and the obstacles are multitudinous. We sympathize with the devoted Foreign Missionary as he toils, amid the deep night of Heathenism, to plant the Cross and hold forth the sufficiency of a crucified Saviour to the benighted understandings of a cavilling and idolatrous people, who reject the council of God with persevering obstinacy and bitter hatred.—Our souls are moved within us, as His lamentations come, wafted to us on the winds from the distant abodes of cruelty: this is "a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evil doers, children that are corrupters. This is a rebellious people, lying children, children that will not hear the law of the Lord." [Isa. 1: 11, 30, 9.]

Nor have our newly settled territories been exempt from many of the evils which depress the hearts of God's servants in other and less favored lands. Think of the Domestic Missionary of other days, who, as he threaded his way through the forests, was compelled to do his "thinking" on horse-back—to preach, as he had opportunity, in the dwellings of the settlers, where one room served for parlor, chamber and kitchen, or in some log-cabin sanctuary, or under the covert of a tree. He

fared scantily, slept coldly, traveled through rain and snow, and crossed deep and turbid streams. No warm home received him—he had no well-stored library, or comfortable study, where he might hold converse with the wise and good of other days, and draw inspiration from the sacred page, and then, with well beaten oil, repair to the house of God. In these days of trial and sorrow, we had no Missionary Boards or Committees, to whose vigilent care was entrusted the collection of funds and supplying the wants of the laborer.[1]

But those days have gone by. The facilities of communication are now easy and rapid. Society has become more refined and intelligent. Our people place a higher estimate on the privileges of a preached gospel. A more competent and certain provision is made for the maintainance of the Missionary. Yes; the difficulties we have experienced we shall experience no more.—Those enemies have fled, and past successes beckon us on to other and more glorious conquests.

Let the past encourage us as to the future,

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1 As an example of the toils and sufferings of the early Missionaries in Georgia, I present the case of the Rev. John Hodge, related by the Rev. Dr. Cunningham, late of Tuscaloosa, Ala., in the communication, from which an extract has been already given.

Mr. Hodge was a young man from Kentucky, who came to Georgia in feeble health. Having in some measure regained his health, he sought employment in his Master's service. "Hearing of a Ladies' Society in Savannah," remarks Dr. C., "who were anxious to employ a Missionary, brother H. made himself known, and received their appointment. The field of his labor lay among a poor, scattered population, many of them unable to feed either himself or his horse. Hence brother Hodge had to purchase and pack his provender, and carry it on his own horse, as much as would last him ten or twelve days; and when that was out, he would return to Savannah, like the sons of old Jacob, and buy more corn. He was himself fed and lodged badly. Mr. Hodge continued six or eight months preaching to, and exhorting this poor, scattered, destitute people."

Methinks, such work would go rather roughly with most of our young Ministers of the present day. It has been observed, that our young men, generally, when they leave the Seminary, manifest a great reluctance to bear hardness in a field of trial, but aspire at once to a comfortable settlement in some town or city Church, before they have put on the harness or fought their first battle. The fact is greatly to be regretted. It was not thus thirty or forty years ago in Georgia, as some now living can testify. Young men should go forth among the destitute and waste places, and learn to sympatize with the needy. Look at young Hodge, mounted on his horse with his sack of corn, traversing the piney woods of Effingham and Scriven, even to the head waters of the Ogechee, that he might preach the everlasting Gospel to the poor, ignorant people who dwelt in those desert plains, and say young man, does it comport with that call you profess to have received to the work of the Ministry to idle away your days, waiting till some wealthy Church calls you to become its pastor?

2. Because, amid all changes, our Rock and Help is the same.

There is no God like the God of Jeshurun. He is the all-sufficient and unchangable God. His arm has ever gotten Him the victory over His enemies. The remembrance of Amalek is blotted out from under Heaven. [Deut. 25 : 19.] "He has graven Zion's name upon the palms of his hands : her walls are continually before him." His love for her remains the same in all ages. "A woman may forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb : yea, she may forget, yet will not I forget thee," saith the Lord. The God who delivered Israel out of all his troubles, and brought him into a land flowing with milk and honey, yet lives and reigns for the redemption of His Church. He still loves the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob. [Psalm 87 : 2.] Though the walls of Jericho rise high, crowned with numerous defenders, yet in the name of the Lord they shall be overthrown. Though the opposition of the powers of Darkness is potent, yet is the word of God mighty to pull down their strong-holds, and dislodge their possessors.

On this fact, the immutability of God's counsels and designs regarding His cause, the Church should ever rest, without a solitary, trembling apprehension as to the final triumph. The Lord is round about his people as the mountains are round about Jerusalem.

The remembrance of past days has always proved to God's people a source of strength and comfort. It was thus to his ancient heritage. The chosen tribes could never forget the strong arm that had brought them out of the house of bondage, and led them through the wilderness. They could never forget the seasons of Divine interposition and deliverance from their numerous enemies, when he brought them out of the captivity of Babylon to enjoy the freedom and religious ordinances of their native land. They could ever sing, in view of these merciful dealings, "There is none holy as the Lord ; for there is none beside Thee ; nor is any Rock like our God." [1. Sam. 2 : 2.] And in later times,

the Church, in the midst of fiery trials, stood, like the burning bush of Horeb, unconsumed, confiding with unwavering confidence in His promised presence and guidance: and when her blood flowed freely from ten thousand martyred saints, God caused it to produce a more abundant seed to serve Him. In the times of the Reformation, as the great red dragon sought to destroy her, her Lord "gave her the wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place" from his rage and malice. [Rev. 12: 13, 14.] He has watched over us as a part of that great family which is named in Heaven and Earth—enlarging our borders and strengthening our hands. Our God is the same to-day as in the days of our fathers—a rock against which the waves ineffectually beat—a helper whose hand none can stay. With humble steadfast reliance on that Arm, one has been able to chase a thousand, and two to put ten thousand to flight.

As we survey the extent of the field which we are called upon to cultivate, the desolations to be builded up, does some one begin to cast around him, and enquire: "Where are the laborers? Whence are we to obtain twenty or thirty Missionaries, to preach to the hundreds of thousands of perishing souls?" Let us not forget, my brethren, that as God raised up deliverers of His people of old, in the persons of Gideon and Barak, Sampson and Jephthæ, and David and Samuel, and the prophets, so will He raise up Ministers qualified for the work to be done. He is the Lord of the Harvest, and in answer to the fervent prayers of His people, He will raise up laborers to reap the whitening fields. God will send them from the East and the West to the field where His work is to be done; yea, God can cause many now in the over-crowded secular professions to cast aside their Blackstones and Cullens and hasten to the study of the Book of Books. He can, from the very stones, raise up sons to Abraham. But some one may be ready to ask, again: "If we had the men, where are the means to sustain them with food and raiment?"—Let us not forget, that the gold and the silver, and the cattle upon a thousand hills belong unto the Lord. To

this service they are and shall be consecrated. We all rejoiced last year to hear that our "ten Missionaries, supplying eighteen Churches and Stations had all been supported during the year; and that the whole means expended in their support had been derived from our own Churches." It sent a thrill of delight through every heart, to learn that Flint River, was at least, not a consuming Presbytery. But what the Churches have done for this cause heretofore, we confidently believe is only a tithe of what they are able to do, and, with the blessing of God, will do, to plant other Churches, and build up feeble ones. There are ten Churches in Flint River Presbytery, we doubt not, ready to give one thousand dollars a-year, and twenty others a like sum to promote this cause, and thereby grow richer in faith and good works, yea, richer in earthly possessions; for "the liberal soul shall be made fat; and he that watereth shall himself be watered." [Prov. 11: 25.]

But let us take courage,

3. Because Christ in all His merit and sympathy and fullness, remains unaltered and unalterable.

The Church in all ages has lived by faith in Him—in Him she has conquered and triumphed—in Him she has stood fast. When she has abandoned this ground, she has ever fallen an easy prey to her enemies.

Whenever she has gone down into Egypt for horses and chariots, God has forsaken her. Whenever she has turned away from the fountain of living waters, and followed cunningly devised fables, and worshipped other gods, He has given her up to be led into captivity. Let her abandon the pure faith as it is in Christ—cease to rely upon the merits of a crucified Redeemer—cast from her hands the holy doctrines of the word of God—renounce her faith in the doctrines of sovereign, efficacious grace, so hated by the natural heart; let her abjure implicit trust in that blood which cleanseth from all sin, and that immaculate righteousness of a Saviour, which can alone adorn the polluted, naked soul of the lost sinner; and from thence let her flee to the flimsy, tottering, rotten covert of her own works, and the fading, per-

ishing fig-leaves of her own righteousness, and we may write Ichabod upon her portals. Offended God will leave her to leanness and barrenness; and blasting and mildew shall rest upon all her borders. But while we plead His merits and trust His omnipotent grace, we shall prevail. A wrestling Jacob was never denied the solicited blessing. While Paul plants and Apollos waters, God gives the increase. And, O! let us never forget the sympathy of the divine Saviour for His Church. He feels for her, and He will have compassion on her.—To-day, that sympathy is as strong and fresh towards His Church as when He parted with His sorrowing disciples on Mount Olivet. He is as much moved with the feeling of her infirmities, as when He turned and fixed that mournful look on the recreant Peter; and He is as free to forgive and restore, as when He asked that erring disciple again and again, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?" Let us joyfully trust Him, then, for He "is the same yesterday and forever."

"I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me," said the Apostle. Let Christ be with the Church, and mountains are removed, and their basis become as the garden of God. She takes up the triumphant challenge uttered by the Prophet: "Who art thou, O great mountain? before Zerubabel, thou shalt bring forth the head-stone thereof with shoutings, crying, Grace, grace unto it." Let us, then, be encouraged to go forward, since we have the succor and fullness of our Redeemer to supply every want.

Let us take courage,

4. Because the Spirit's efficient agency is still with the Church to guide, support and comfort it.

The word of the ascending Saviour has been fulfilled and verified in ten thousand instances: "The Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatever I have said unto you." The memories of past days are sweet and refreshing, when the stately goings of the Lord were witnessed in His sanctuary, and when He caused grace to "drop on us as the rain, and distill as the dew, as the

small rain upon the herb, and the showers upon the grass." [Deut. 32: 2.] The remembrance of these seasons of refreshing, should banish all discouragment from every heart. With Him is the residue of the Spirit, and Heaven's windows are yet open, and the ear of Jehovah yet hears the supplications of His people. Well might we despond, if His holy influences were withdrawn, if the celestial Dove should remove His dwelling place from our Zion. But he is still within her, to bless her sons, and impart success to their efforts. He is still present to make the words quick and powerful, and as the great hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces [Jer. 23: 29.] We do look for days of refreshing from the presence of the Lord. Past seasons were as the first fruits, and they are the pledges of future prosperity and blessedness. Yes, He still wields that double-edged sword which shall be sharp in the hearts of the King's enemies. [Ps. 45: 5.] Clothed with spiritual planoply, the feeblest instrument becomes a son of thunder. God can cause the battlements of Sin to totter and fall before the blast of the ram's horns, as before the richer and more harmonious tones of the silver trumpets.—"Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts." Let this be the motto inscribed on our banner, and then "speak to the people that they go forward."

We should take courage,

5. Because the day of Christ's universal dominion is approaching.

To Him the heathen shall soon be given for an inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for His possession. The promises and prophesies concerning Christ's universal triumph over the powers of Darkness, are the windows of the temple which let in the rays of comfort and joy. Wide spread as are the effects of the curse—dreary and desolate as it has rendered earth—bold and daring as the rebellion of man has become—and strongly as the powers of Hell have entrenched themselves in the human heart; it is, nevertheless, a cheering, joyful fact that the Christian may take his stand on the great and precious promises of the Divine word and sing,

"Jesus shall reign where'er the Sun
Doth his successive journeys run."

The signs of the times indicate that the day of millenial glory is drawing nigh. May we not even now behold its first blush tinging the horizon? The nations are receiving the word of Life—the isles of the sea are beginning to rejoice, and the Angel, having the everlasting Gospel to preach unto all men, is stretching his pinions for his glorious flight. All along the coasts of heathenism the watch-fires of the Missionary have been kindled, and he has gone up to reconnoitre the enemy's camp.

We constitute, my brethren, a part of that sacramental host, which must share in that mighty conflict, and rejoice with the redeemed in the final victory.—And when we look to our glorious Leader, can we doubt for a single moment the successful issue of the contest? Majesty encircles his brow—He is riding from conquering to conquer; grace is poured into His lips; and His sceptre is a sceptre of righteousness and power.—The world's subjugation to His sovereign sway is sure, for God hath decreed it. Our cause is the cause of God and Truth against the workings of Satan and Falsehood.

The conversion of our fellow-men at home hastens the salvation of those in heathen lands—hastens the universal spread of the Gospel. Every converted soul brings a new ally to Christ. Every converted soul, is another mighty instrumentality raised up to pray, and toil, and give for the salvation of those sitting in the shadow of Death. Home Missions, and Foreign Missions, thus sustain mutual relations, and have a reflex influence upon each other. Then,

"Father of Mercies! speed the promised hour;
Thy kingdom come, with all restoring power;
Peace, virture, knowledge, spread from pole to pole,
As round the world the ocean-waters roll:
Hope waits the morning of celestial light;
Time plumes his wings for everlasting night:
Unchanging seasons have their march begun;
Millenial years are hastening to the sun."

"Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, immoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord." [1. Cor. 15 : 58.]

But, finally, let us take courage,

6. In prospect of meeting to celebrate the great jubilee of the Church in Heaven.

Some of our number have passed over the flood since our existence as a Presbytery; others of us are nearing the river: others yet are coming, and we shall all, ere long, pass over, and join the General Assembly of the Church of the first born in the Canaan above. And when resting there, we shall never, never look back with regret upon the toil and sacrifices of earth. The poor wandering Missionary of the Cross will never grieve that he was so scantily fed, or meanly clothed, as he prosecuted his work and labor of love on earth, when he shall have been gathered with all the saints in that one vast, innumerable company on the plains of Celestial Glory. We may well, indeed, endure hardness for a few days here, with such a cheering prospect before us, of enjoying forever the undisturbed, unending communion of Heaven, with Saints and Angels. What is one short night of toil, compared with that morning of joy and day of eternal repose, where we shall join in that grand and universal anthem, "Alleluia, Alleuia, for the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth! blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honor, and power, and might, be unto our God forever and ever." O, what a day of joy and exultation will that be, when each reaper in the great harvest of the world shall come bearing his sheaves, "and everlasting joy shall be upon his head, and sorrow and mourning shall flee away." There will meet Prophets and Apostles and Martyrs: the laborers from the East, the West, the North, the South. There will stand the faithful Pastor, surrounded by his happy, ransomed flock. There will appear the Missionary from India and China, from Africa and the far-distant isles of the sea, with a multitude redeemed from the darkness of heathenism and the curse of Idolatry. And there will meet the pioneer Missionaries of

our own and other lands, who sought out the few scattered sheep in the wilderness, and planted Churches, reared the standard of the Cross, and gathered the Lambs of the flock into the Sabbath School, and fed them with the bread of life. And there will come the laborer among the colored descendants of Afric's race, bearing with him a multitude, to join their kindred, recovered by the power of Christ's salvation, from the low and grovelling superstitions of that cursed, degraded land of Ham. Then, will go up one mighty, joyous shout from the redeemed of every kindred and tongue and people, and nation. Then, will they join to "sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of Saints." There,

"No grief can change their day to night;
"The darkness of that land is light;
Sorrowing and sighing, God has sent
Far hence, to endless banishment;
And never more may one dark tear
Bedim their burning skies:
For every one they shed while here
In fearful agonies,
Glitters a bright dazzling gem
In their immortal diadem."

Brethren, I have done. Let us arise and build; for the time to build the Lord's house has come. Let Presbyterians within the bounds of Flint River Presbytery do their duty. Let them give to this noble cause as God shall prosper them. It is the "power of the littles" that accomplishes great things. The little rills from yonder mountains, make the mighty river. The little drops of water, fill the vast depths of the ocean. A little fire kindleth a great matter. The little sums fill the Missionary Treasury. God brings great results out of little causes. Then, let the experience of the past inspire us with confidence in the future. Paul thanked

God and took courage. May we imitate his example. AMEN!